

Guatemala's president warns Americans on border infiltration threats

By Mike Gonzalez October 11, 2023 06:00 AM



GUATEMALA CITY — This weekend's harrowing terrorist acts in [Israel](#) have made it all the clearer to Americans that President [Joe Biden's](#) opening of our border has put the United States at grave risk. At least one Central American leader says he warned the administration years ago. [Guatemalan](#) President Alejandro Giammattei cautions us that we are being invaded, perhaps by terrorists.

He would know. Giammattei leads a bridge country through which thousands of Chinese, Russian, Iraqi, Yemeni, Cuban, and Venezuelan nationals have transited on the way to the U.S.-Mexico border each year since Biden's election. Conversations held by a Heritage Foundation delegation visiting Guatemala last week, a visit that ended one day before Hamas invaded Israel on Oct. 7 and murdered 1,000 people indiscriminately, included not just Guatemala's president but members of the opposition, intelligence officials and military officers, and members of civil society institutions.

WHAT IS HAMAS, AND WHO IS THE COMMANDER KNOWN AS 'THE GUEST' BEHIND THE TERROR ATTACK ON ISRAEL?

The talks revealed once again how Venezuela, Russia, Iran, and other enemies are using the chaos at our border to infiltrate the U.S. and create instability.

"The United States is going to have very big problems," warned Giammattei, who leaves office in three months, during lunch at the presidential palace on Oct. 4. "What the United States has is not an emigration process. What the United States has is a process of invasion."

Giammattei says he has warned the administration that "there are 286,000 persons in [Panama's] Darien Gap. [Venezuelan dictator Nicolas] Maduro has sent them to create instability in the United States. Panama is the hub of emigration. Everyone passes through the Darien Gap. I explained it to [the administration] two years ago."

The Biden administration is likely to ignore Giammattei now, just as it has ignored him or maligned him since taking office in January 2021, instead of working with him to stop the immigration flows. Giammattei is a conservative who has had good rapport with some Republicans on the Hill. He is fiercely pro-life, pro-Taiwan, and pro-Israel. All these features predisposed the Biden administration against him, especially Vice President Kamala Harris.

The Biden administration is now locked in a dispute with the Guatemalan government over the Public Ministry's investigation of the Semilla party of President-elect Bernardo Arevalo, who was elected in August and takes power in January. Indeed, the U.S. Agency for International Development funds the indigenous group 48 Cantones, which is paralyzing much of Guatemala at the moment with massive pro-Arevalo demonstrations.

We see this as an internal Guatemalan matter and trust Guatemalan institutions and civil society to solve this peacefully. But we hardly think USAID should be spending American taxpayer money to pour gasoline on a volatile situation. Guatemalans we met in government and the private sector complained vociferously about USAID's interference in their domestic matters.

Arevalo's surprise win was the latest in a sequence of victories by leftists in the region. It followed Gabriel Boric's 2021 win in Chile, Gustavo Petro's in Colombia, and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's in Brazil in 2022. All have joined regional Marxist groupings, such as the Grupo de Puebla, that have strong anti-American and pro-China stances yet have been embraced by the Biden administration.

"The United States has lost international hegemony, and to recover this hegemony you must recover this continent," Giammattei said, adding, however, that the administration appears to "have ceded all the territory to China. There are also Russian troops in Nicaragua." In fact, Giammattei said that it seemed to him that the Biden administration "wants to encourage this illegal immigration, and this illegal immigration is going to destroy American values."

A Guatemalan intelligence report we obtained said that 20,522 people from nine "nationalities of interest" in terms of terrorism and narcotics trade — China, Russia, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Yemen — had arrived in Guatemala between Jan. 1, 2022, and Aug. 31, 2023. Of these, by far the most, 5,859, came from China, followed by 2,153 from Russia.

These are just legal entries. The total number is likely to be much higher. During a trip to the border last spring, I interviewed a businessman in Brownsville, Texas, who told me that the previous week, he had spoken to 10 Russians who had just made it over the border and spoke pretty good Spanish because they had been staying in Venezuela. "We have seized immigrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc. There will be terrorists," Giammattei warned.

Guatemalan officials told us that before pouring through the ungarded U.S.-Mexico border, the immigrants from outside the hemisphere — the Middle East, South Asia, Russia, etc. — gather in socialist Venezuela. The Cubans come through Nicaragua before undertaking the trek north.

Guatemala moved its embassy to Jerusalem in 2018. Giammattei, an ardent supporter of Israel, told us that Arevalo plans to move it back to Tel Aviv and set up a separate embassy in "Palestine." He pondered, "How is Arevalo going to explain to the Republicans that he has set up an embassy in Palestine? Where is the coherence?" We asked Semilla if this was true and received an ambiguous response.

After this weekend's carnage by Hamas, opening an embassy in "Palestine" may now be impossible. Perhaps many will also realize just how vulnerable the chaotic border has made America.